

REPORT OF CHAIR OF PLANNING 2017-2018

During this Council year the Planning Committee of Aylesford Parish Council has dealt with 186 applications and raised 18 objections to proposed developments.

The Planning Committee goes through each of the applications on a ward basis with local councillors from their respective areas making an assessment as to the value of the developments in respect of both the applicants and their immediate neighbours. Great consideration is given to the effect of any scheme upon its locality, its environment and as to the aesthetic appearance of the streetscape. With such local expertise and enthusiasm from local councillors it is somewhat disappointing to see that 10 of our 18 objections were given permission by TMBC whilst only 2 were refused. A further 2 more withdrawn and 4 are still to be decided.

By far the majority of applications are for small projects such as a change of garage to a room, adding extra bedrooms, changing windows and of course in the more rural areas of the parish numerous applications for tree pruning or felling.

Amongst the mid-range projects we have had to look at were for 12 3-storey town houses in the Forstal Road area of Aylesford, 6 apartments and 3 houses at the former Bridgewood Service Station site at Blue Bell Hill. There was a request from the owners of the former Upper Bell site for an apartment block of 10 flats and 4 semi-detached houses which we regarded as over-development of this site.

Larger and more wide-ranging projects have included the opening up and commercialisation for `The Big Motoring World` Group at Nil Desperandum site at Buckmore Park roundabout and for up to 840 dwellings outlined in Gladman`s Development Plans in July 2017 for land south of London road and East of Hermitage Lane, Aylesford to which we objected. There was also one for 58 apartments and 21 town houses at the Mill Hall Depot site at Aylesford. Then in December at the Cabins, 78A Rochester Road (Aylesford Quarry) an application to demolish and re-develop the site to include the construction of 146 dwellings, café/restaurant/clinics/assembly and leisure was made. There was also in January a request to construct 92 dwellings within associated parking at the former Somerfield site in Station Road in Aylesford. We have looked at all of these `larger` developments with a careful eye whilst paying heed to the needs and requirements of the TMBC 5 Year House/Land Supply documents that APC had received. Despite central government pressure on authorities like TMBC to come up with solutions to the house shortage problem we will continue to put the needs of local residents at the forefront of our thinking when large proposals are made and, of course, to protect the environment as well.

There have also been some full and frank discussions about issues like the speed of traffic within Eccles and along main roads in the Walderslade area. Finally there have been the more unusual applications such as to extend the season for

glamping at Kits Coty Estate, whether to allow the Hengist to play music outside their establishment or to argue about the suitability of dog breeding kennels close by the Crematorium in Blue Bell Hill and of course the continuing saga of demolition and reconstruction of buildings associated with the redevelopment of the airport site at Rochester in the north of our area.

In closing I would like to thank Cllr Barry Smith for undertaking the role of Vice Chairman during the year and to mention again the hard work of all of the Councillors in overseeing the 186 applications. In retrospect I would like to say that over the past few years I have really enjoyed being Chair of Planning and hopefully have made some small difference to its outcome and am now retiring to the 'backbenches' due to the growing pressure of work commitments.

Cllr Malcolm Wright

Chairman of Planning 2017-18